

**Amendments to the Claims:**

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

**Listing of Claims:**

Claim 1 (currently amended): A method of connecting together two sections of tubing comprising the steps of:

placing the two tubing sections in opposed, end-to-end relation so that axially facing surfaces of the tube sections at the ends are free from exposure to the surrounding environment;

maintaining interior passages of the two tubing sections so as to be free from exposure to the surrounding environment until and during welding;

positioning a separate sheet of material between the axial surfaces at the ends of the tubing sections, the sheet being formed of a material which absorbs energy of an electromagnetic beam;

~~bringing moving the two tubing sections to bring the respective axially facing surfaces of the two tubing sections into engagement with the sheet, the sheet not previously attached to either of the two sections of tubing prior to the connecting of the sections; and~~

directing the electromagnetic beam onto the sheet for welding the two sections of tubing together.

Claim 2 (original): A method as set forth in claim 1 wherein during the step of placing the two tubing sections in opposed, end-to-end relation, the temperature of each of the tubing sections at the axial surfaces thereof is below the melting temperature of material forming the tubing section.

Claims 3 to 4 (cancelled).

Claim 5 (original): A method as set forth in claim 4 wherein the tubing sections are formed of a material which is substantially transparent to the electromagnetic beam.

Claim 6 (original): A method as set forth in claim 3 further comprising, following the step of directing an electromagnetic beam, the step of moving the tubing sections toward each other causing some material of the tubing sections to flow radially outwardly.

Claim 7 (previously presented): A method as set forth in claim 1 which includes applying a dye to the axially facing surface of at least one of the tubing sections, the dye being selected to increase absorption of energy from the electromagnetic beam to promote fusion of the tubing sections at the axially facing surfaces.

Claim 8 (original): A method as set forth in claim 7 wherein the step of placing the two tubing sections in opposed, end-to-end relation includes bringing the axially facing surfaces of the tubing sections into engagement with each other.

Claim 9 (previously presented): A method as set forth in claim 1 further comprising, prior to the step of placing the two tubing sections in opposed, end-to-end relation, the step of positioning the two tubing sections in substantially coaxial position and removing end portions of the tubing sections.

Claim 10 (original): A method as set forth in claim 9 further comprising clamping cut end margins of the two tubing sections closed.

Claim 11 (original): A method as set forth in claim 10 further comprising welding each of the closed cut end margins to seal interior passages of the tubing section.

Claim 12 (previously presented): A method as set forth in claim 11 wherein the step of welding each of the closed cut end margins comprises directing a beam of electromagnetic radiation onto a block in contact with the closed cut end margin, the block absorbing energy from the electromagnetic beam and transferring heat to the tubing section with which it is in contact.

Claim 13 (original): A method as set forth in claim 11 further comprising, following the step of directing an electromagnetic beam, the step of reopening the closed end margins of the joined tubing sections by squeezing the tubing sections.

Claim 14 (original): A method as set forth in claim 13 further comprising, following the step of directing an electromagnetic beam and prior to the step of reopening the closed end margins, the step of shipping the connected tubing sections to a remote location.

Claim 15 (original): A method as set forth in claim 11 wherein all of the steps are carried out with the tubing sections in said substantially coaxial position.

Claim 16 (original): A method as set forth in claim 1 further comprising, following the step of directing an electromagnetic beam, the step of moving the tubing sections toward each other causing some material of the tubing sections to flow radially outwardly.

Claim 17 (cancelled).

Claim 18 (currently amended): A method of connecting tubing sections comprising:  
for each of the tubing section sections:

clamping at least a portion of the tubing section such that a collapsed portion of the tubing section extends past the clamped portion;

covering an end of the tubing section with an energy absorption member, the energy absorption member formed of a material that absorbs energy from an electromagnetic beam;

directing the electromagnetic beam onto the energy absorption member;

transferring heat from the energy absorption member to the collapsed tubing section portion by contact therewith to melt and seal the collapsed tubing section portion in its collapsed configuration; and

removing the energy absorption member;

placing the tubing ~~section sections~~ in opposed, end-to-end relation ~~with a sealed second tubing section~~;

positioning a separate sheet of material between axially facing surfaces at the ends of the tubing sections, the sheet being formed of a material which absorbs energy of the electromagnetic beam;

bringing the respective axially facing surfaces of the ~~two~~ tubing sections into engagement with the sheet, ~~the sheet not previously attached to either of the sections of tubing prior to the connecting of the sections~~; and

directing the electromagnetic beam onto the sheet for welding the sections of tubing together.

Claim 19 (original): A method as set forth in claim 18 wherein the energy absorption member has low thermal conductivity.

Claim 20 (previously presented): A method as set forth in claim 19 wherein the energy absorption member comprises a block.

Claim 21 (previously presented): A method as set forth in claim 20 wherein the block is made of one of polytetrafluoroethylene and glass.

Claim 22 (original): A method as set forth in claim 18 wherein the energy absorption member comprises a film.

Claim 23 (cancelled).

Claim 24 (previously presented): A method as set forth in claim 18, wherein the collapsed portion of the tubing section is an end of the tubing section.

Claim 25 (previously presented): The method of claim 1, which includes extending the sheet of material between a supply roll and a take-up roll.

Claim 26 (cancelled).

Claim 27 (previously presented): The method of claim 18, which includes extending the sheet of material between a supply roll and a take-up roll.

Claim 28 (cancelled).